

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-03

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 PM-07 NSC-10 SS-15 NIC-01 ACDA-19

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2403

USIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 11713

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR

SUBJ: ARBATOV DISCUSSES VOA AND U.S. CORRESPONDENTS

REF: MOSCOW 11385

1. SUMMARY: USA INSTITUTE DIRECTOR ARBATOV HOSTED LUNCHEON FOR USIA DIRECTOR KEOGH AND CHARGE SEPTEMBER 75. ARBATOV PICKED UP FROM SEPT 19 CONVERSATION (REFTEL). MAIN THING ON HIS MIND WAS VOA POLICY: HE COMPLAINED THAT SOME VOA COMMENTARIES, AS OPPOSED TO VOA REPORTAGE, TAKE POSITION ON DISSIDENTS WHICH IS DIFFERENT FROM OFFICIAL U.S. POLICY AND THUS CREATE GRAVE DOUBTS ON PART OF SOVIET OFFICIALS AS TO WHAT U.S. POLICY REALLY IS. ARBATOV ALSO DISCUSSED WORK OF U.S. CORRESPONDENTS IN SOVIET UNION, AND TOUCHED BRIEFLY ON U.S. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON STRATEGIC WEAPONRY. FOLLOWING ACCOUNT OF CONVERSATION HAS NOT BEEN CLEARED BY DIRECTOR KEOGH. END SUMMARY.

2. ARBATOV SAID THAT IN LOOKING AT PRESENT PROSPECTS FOR U.S.-SOVIET RELATIONS, ONE OF THINGS WHICH THREATENS TO POSE SERIOUS PROBLEMS IS VOA POLICY. HE SAID HE HAS SPOKEN TO SEVERAL PEOPLE WHO LISTEN TO VOA, INCLUDING THOSE WHOSE JOB IT IS TO DO SO AT STATE COMMITTEE  
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FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION. THEY TELL HIM THAT VOA

DEVOTES A LOT OF TIME TO THE DISSIDENTS. MORE IMPORTANT, VOA SOMETIMES CARRIES ITS OWN COMMENTARIES ON DISSIDENTS WHICH TAKE AS POSITION DIFFERENT FROM OFFICIAL POLICY AS SET FORTH BY SECRETARY KISSINGER. (HE REFERRED APPROVINGLY TO THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENTS AT HIS CONFIRMATION HEARINGS.) IT IS UNDERSTANDABLE THAT VOA MIGHT CARRY NEWS REPORTS ON THIS SUBJECT, BUT IT CAUSES GRAVE CONCERN AND CONFUSION ON PART OF SOVIET OFFICIALS TO LEARN THAT OFFICIAL U.S. GOVERNMENT RADIO TAKES POSITIONS CONTRARY TO STATED U.S. POLICY ON MATTER OF THIS DELICACY.

3. KEOGH BRIEFLY EXPLAINED THAT VOA SEEKS TO CONVEY NEWS ABOUT THE U.S. AND ABOUT U.S. PUBLIC OPINION, AS EXPRESSED IN SPEECHES AND EDITORIALS, ON TOPICS WHICH ARE OF GREATEST INTEREST IN THE U.S., BUT DOES NOT ITSELF ORIGINATE COMMENT ON MATTERS WHICH ARE PRIMARILY INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF OTHER COUNTRIES. ONE OF OTHER SOVIETS PRESENT MADE POINT THAT OFTEN THE SOVIET LISTENER DOES NOT DISTINGUISH BETWEEN REPORTING ON OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY VARIOUS SOURCES AND THE OPINION OF GOVERNMENT RADIO STATION ITSELF. ARBATOV AGREED WITH THIS AS PART OF THE PROBLEM, BUT INSISTED THAT HIS SOURCES TELL HIM THAT SOMETIMES VOA ITSELF HAS ORIGINATED COMMENT ON DISSIDENTS.

4. KEOGH BROUGHT UP TREATMENT OF U.S. JOURNALISTS, NOTING THAT RECENT LEDDINGTON INCIDENT WAS UNFORTUNATE IN MANY RESPECTS, NOT THE LEAST BECAUSE OF THE BAD IMPRESSION IT CREATED IN THE U.S. ARBATOV SHIFTED QUESTION TO BROAD CONTEXT OF WORKING CONDITIONS OF FOREIGN JOURNALISTS AND THEIR ATTITUDES. HE SAID HE HAD NOTED THAT MANY U.S. JOURNALISTS ARRIVE IN MOSCOW SINCERELY INTERESTED IN DOING HONEST JOB OF REPORTING, BUT BEFORE LONG THEY BEGIN TO FOCUS ONLY ON NEGATIVE ASPECTS. HE ADDED THAT PART OF REASON FOR THIS IS FRUSTRATION IN NOT HAVING OPPORTUNITIES TO DEVELOP STORIES ALONG MORE POSITIVE LINES, AND SAID THAT HE PERSONALLY HAS LONG URGED SOVIET AUTHORITIES TO DO SOMETHING TO REMEDY LATTER SITUATION. HE UNDERSTOOD THAT IN FACT SOME IMPROVEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE, BUT UNFOR-

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UNFORTUNATELY U.S. JOURNALISTS CONTINUE AS IN THE PAST TO DEAL ONLY IN NEGATIVE NEWS.

5. ARBATOV RAISED ONE OTHER PROBLEM AS CASTING SHADOWS ON SOVIET READING OF U.S. DETENTE POLICY. HE COMMENTED THAT CERTAIN AMERICANS -- NOT MERELY NEWSPAPER COMMENTATORS BUT OFFICIALS WHO ARE IN POSITION TO KNOW BETTER -- ARE TALKING LOOSELY ABOUT STRATEGIC WEAPONS,

USING SCARE STORIES AND ARGUING THE NEED FOR BARGAIN-  
ING CHIPS. SUCH PUBLIC STATEMENTS CREATE QUESTIONS IN  
MINDS OF SOVIET OFFICIALS ABOUT U.S. INTENTIONS AND  
COMMITMENT TO LONG-TERM DETENTE. (COMMENT: THIS  
SUBJECT WAS RAISED IN PASSING, WITH COMMENT THAT IT WAS  
NOT OF IMMEDIATE INTEREST TO KEOGH AND THEREFORE NOT A  
SUBJECT WHICH ARBATOV WANTED TO PURSUE; HE THEN WENT  
ON TO MAKE PITCH ON VOA DESCRIBED ABOVE. WE ASSUME HE  
WAS REFLECTING CURRENT SOVIET PRESS AGITATION ABOUT  
REMARKS BY SECDEF SCHLESINGER ON SOVIET MIRVS AND ABOUT  
TESTIMONY ON NEW U.S. WEAPONS SYSTEMS.)

6. AT ANOTHER POINT IN CONVERSATION, RESPONDING TO A

QUESTION BY THE CHARE ABOUT SPEECH-MAKING AND SPEECH-  
WRITING AS POLICY-MAKING MECHANISM, ARBATOV VOLUNTEERED  
COMMENT ON BREZHNEV TASHKENT SPEECH THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED  
BY THE ATTENTION DEVOTED TO CHINA AND HAPPY TO SEE THAT  
BREZHNEV HAD PICKED UP CHOU'S COMMENTS ON POSSIBILITY  
OF NORMALIZING RELATIONS ON BASIS OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE.

7. ALSO ATTENDING LUNCHEON WAS A NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
OF USA INSTITUTE, VASILY ROMANOVICH SITNIKOV. SITNIKOV  
TOLD US THAT HIS FOCUS WILL BE "IDEOLOGICAL QUESTIONS,"  
HASTENING TO ADD THAT HE WILL NOT BE SEEKING TO  
INTENSIFY THE "IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE" BUT MERELY TO STUDY  
AMERICAN VIEWS ON THIS QUESTION.

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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** PRESS COMMENTS, POLITICAL FREEDOM, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, JOURNALISTS, RADIO BROADCASTING  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** collinp0  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** MOSCOW 11385  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** collinp0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 28 SEP 2001  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <28-Sep-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <04 MAR 2002 by collinp0>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** ARBATOV DISCUSSES VOA AND U.S. CORRESPONDENTS  
**TAGS:** PFOR, UR, VOA, (ARBATOV)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005